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# **DIGEST OF SIGNIFICANT CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS AND OPINIONS**

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## **Note to Readers**

The guidance in this issue is still applicable and useful in classifying positions in the Federal government. However, there may be references to names and addresses of organizations within the U.S. Office of Personnel Management that have changed, names of individuals no longer employed at the Office of Personnel Management, or documents such as the Federal Personnel Manual that no longer exist.

For the December 1997 HRCD-4 release, the Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs made minor, nonsubstantive edits to Digest issues 1 through 19. For example, acronyms and abbreviations were spelled out in many places, references to law and regulation were expanded, typographical errors were corrected, leading zeros were added to 3-digit series numbers, outdated prefaces have been deleted, and the issuance date were added to the header of each page. Because of the change from the original paper version to an electronic format, the page numbers in Digest issues 1 through 19 and other references, such as the General Schedule classification standards and Federal Wage System job grading standards, now available electronically may have changed. In issues 1 through 19, where there is a reference to a page, we either eliminated the page reference or updated the page number with the page number of the electronic version. Beginning with issue 20, pages references are to the electronic version only. Please note that pages numbers may change when a file is printed depending on the format and printer used.

The Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs is responsible for the content of the Digest. We be reached by telephone at 202-606-2990, by fax at 202-606-2663, or by email at [ADOMSOE@OPM.GOV](mailto:ADOMSOE@OPM.GOV).

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**Standard:** Program Analysis Series, GS-0345, and  
Miscellaneous Administrative and Program  
Series, GS-0301

**Factor:** Series selection

**Issue:** Intended use of Program Analysis Series,  
GS-0345, vs. the Miscellaneous  
Administrative and Program Series, GS-0301

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**This article was deleted in March 1992 due  
to abolishment of the GS-345 series.**

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**Standard:** Computer Specialist, GS-0334

**Factor:** Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the  
Position

**Issue:** Definition of “mastery” requirement (Level  
1-8)

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**This article was deleted in March 1992  
because of the issuance of a new standard  
for the GS-334 series.**

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**Standard:** Secretary, GS-0318

**Factor:** Factor I - Knowledge Required by the Position

**Issue:** Distinguishing between Work Situation B and Work Situation C

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

This issue arose in the Office of Personnel Management's processing of a classification appeal.

A secretary to the Group Commander of a Combat Support Group at an Air Force Base requested that her position be reclassified to the series and grade allocated by the servicing personnel office. The position's classification had been changed by the Headquarters personnel office.

The Combat Support Group, through ten sections, squadrons, divisions, etc., provided base support services to the co-located combat wing and tenant units.

The secretary contended that her position met the minimum criteria for Work Situation C by the GS-0318 standard.

### **Resolution**

The Office of Personnel Management regional office found that Work Situation B was most appropriate for the work environment. In a previous evaluation (Digest Volume 1, No. 1) the Office of Personnel Management noted that the subelement "Work Situation" is designed to measure the complexity of the Organization served, i.e., the immediate office of the supervisor and any subordinate offices, meaning only those units under the direct line authority of the supervisor. The presence of administrative support offices, whether under the line control of an organization or not, however, is not conclusive evidence either for or against Work Situation C; it is the degree of managerial autonomy which is the ultimate consideration.

The Combat Support Group had 10 subordinate sections, divisions, and squadrons, most of which were further subdivided into branches (chaplain services, personnel, security, mail, audio-visual services, civil engineering, and many others), each involving different administrative requirements and needs. Management of the Combat Support Group's functions was accomplished through inter-mediate supervisors and systems of formal internal procedures, controls, and reporting requirements. Therefore, the criteria for Work Situation B were met.

In determining whether Work Situation C was met, the evaluation was guided by the Secretary Series Explanatory Memorandum, the definition in the standard, and benchmark descriptions for the types of organizations described at Work Situation C. The GS-0318 Explanatory Memorandum states, "Managerial autonomy contemplates such responsibilities as long range planning, commitment of resources, program evaluation, decisions which impact on relationships with other groups, etc." The evaluation also noted, from review of benchmarks, that significant technical authority is not necessarily concomitant with managerial authority which would warrant Work Situation C. In this specific case the Wing Commander had final administrative and managerial decision authority. Therefore, the Combat Support Group was not fully comparable to the intent of Work Situation C.

In evaluating this subelement, the classifier should distinguish between technical and administrative/managerial authority and recognize that the presence of one of the conditions cited under Work Situation C in the standard does not justify Work Situation C without the requisite managerial autonomy.

**Standard:** Job Grading Standard for Supervisors (WS)

**Factor:** Nature of Supervisory Responsibility

**Issue:** Credit for positions that exceed Foreman level

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

This issue arose in the adjudication of an appeal from a wage grade supervisor. The position exceeded the Foreman level of supervisory responsibility as described in Factor 1 of the Job Grading Standard for Supervisors. The question was whether the General Foreman level could be credited.

A Foreman typically supervises nonsupervisory workers, and has substantially full supervisory responsibility for control over work operations and the subordinate workforce. At the Foreman level, supervisors are accountable to higher-level supervisors for quantity and quality of work produced by the unit. Acting within general policies and work schedules set by higher management, they are charged with assuring the efficient and economical accomplishment of work assignments. They usually plan weekly or monthly work schedules and sequence of operations. They perform administrative tasks such as promoting management programs, recommending personnel actions, and maintaining production reports and records.

A General Foreman, by contrast, typically is a second-level or higher-level supervisor. Supervisors at this level are responsible for planning, coordinating, and directing a variety of related work operations, usually through one or more subordinate levels of supervision. They direct work operations within the policies and production schedules set by higher management. They typically plan and schedule work on a long-range basis, e.g., 3 to 6 months in advance. They have greater administrative responsibility than a Foreman; for instance, they provide advice to higher management on matters such as budget estimates, changes in operating procedures, and needed facilities.

The appealed position met all of the criteria for a Foreman, and in some respects exceeded that level. The appellant received assignments in the form of a work schedule that normally was a one-year projection of major overhauls. By contrast, a Foreman's work planning is typically done on a weekly or monthly basis. In addition, the appellant prepared an annual budget for the maintenance and repair of equipment. This budget reflected all planned shop work, material procurements, and anticipated contractual work. Such administrative duties are not typical of a Foreman, but may be found at the General Foreman level.

### Resolution

The appealed position was found to be properly classified at the Foreman level. While in a few respects it exceeded the criteria of a Foreman, it clearly fell short of the responsibility of a General Foreman. The essence of the higher level is not the performance of particular tasks (such as long-term planning and budget preparation), but rather is the existence of an overall work situation. This work situation presumes broad managerial authority over extensive operations and a sizable and diverse workforce. Typically, a General Foreman does not directly supervise the work of a unit. Rather, the General Foreman's focus is on creating a positive working climate, organizing and coordinating assigned functions, and making decisions on significant management and personnel matters. The General Foreman must of necessity relinquish substantial control over day-to-day operations by delegating substantial supervisory and technical authority to subordinates.

The appellant supervised a workforce of 10-15 employees; he had neither subordinate units nor subordinate supervisors reporting to him. All subordinates performed the same kind of work. The position description clearly stated that he *personally* supervised and directed the assigned crew. Thus, while the position exceeded the Foreman level in some respects, it did not meet the work situation required for General Foreman solely because of long-range planning and budgeting duties.



**Standard:** Job Grading Standard for Supervisors (WS)

**Factor:** Factor II, Level of Work Supervised

**Issue:** Determination of level of work supervised that reflects the difficulty and complexity of the overall work

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management review which led to a classification appeal.

An agency had classified a Warehouseman Foreman, WS-6907 position at the WS-06 grade level based on the presence of two WG-06 Warehouse Worker positions under the foreman's supervision. An Office of Personnel Management regional office, however, downgraded the foreman's position to WS-05 because it considered that just 2 out of a total of 24 subordinate positions did not represent the level of work supervised that reflected "the difficulty and complexity of the overall work operations," in accordance with Factor II, Level of Work Supervised, of the Job Grading Standard for Supervisors (WS). The agency appealed the decision based on the concept of "regular and recurring" work at the WG-06 level and the supervisor's own "exercise of the scope of skills, knowledges, and abilities typical of the WG-6 grade level."

### **Resolution**

In the appeal decision, the Office of Personnel Management observed that Factor II does not impose a specific minimum number or percentage of employees to justify acceptance or rejection of the grade of the highest level nonsupervisory employees for credit as the level of work supervised. While the standard includes the observation that the grade of the highest level nonsupervisory employees usually is credited, it is mitigated by the admonition that "Care must be used to make certain that the grade of the subordinate jobs really reflect the level and complexity of the work operations supervised and their effect on the difficulty and responsibility of the supervisor's position." The standard also provides guidance for a situation involving an equal amount of work in different occupations at different grade levels. This example would not have been necessary if all that had been intended is that the highest grade of regular and recurring work be used. The Office of Personnel Management did not intend that the existence of regular and recurring subordinate work at a higher grade should automatically justify crediting that grade as the level of work supervised. The grade of the higher grade subordinate positions may have been based on duties performed for a distinct minority of time. Thus, supervision of a small number of the higher grade positions would result in a minimal amount of supervision extended over a minimal amount of work at the higher level. This cannot be regarded as justification for

determining that the higher grade jobs necessarily "reflect the difficulty and complexity of the overall work operations supervised."

Apart from the question of establishing the level of work supervised from either the actual or constructed grades of subordinates, there remains the question of whether the duties and responsibilities of the supervisor can be used to establish the level of work supervised for supervisory grade-determination purposes. However, this factor (Factor II) concerns only the level of work performed by subordinates. It is not intended to credit "supervisory" responsibility over the level of the supervisor's own personal contributions to work accomplishment. Such personal contributions should be graded, as appropriate, by the application of nonsupervisory job grading standards. Factor II is intended to measure the supervisory responsibility only, i.e., the effect of positions supervised on the difficulty and responsibility of the supervisor's position.

The concept of the highest grade "regular and recurring" work controlling the grade of wage grade positions cannot be used to justify awarding a supervisory position a higher grade based on subordinate work having a less-than-significant effect on the difficulty and responsibility of the supervisory position (refer to the Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions, Volume 1, No. 4, dated January 1984). On page 2, the Office of Personnel Management pointed out that while there "is no specific percentage-of-time requirement for duties controlling the grade of the job," . . . "special care should be exercised if the percentage devoted to the highest-grade duties is low (e.g., 15 percent)." Still greater care is required in the grading of supervisory positions which may devote a small percentage of their time to the supervision of the higher grade subordinate positions.

The decision of the Office of Personnel Management regional office was affirmed. The correct classification of the position was Warehouseman Foreman, WS-6907-05.

**Standard:** Supervisory Grade Evaluation Guide, Part I

**Factor:** Factor III, Element 2: Variety of Work

**Issue:** Nonsupervisory work personally performed  
by a supervisor GS-0460

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**This article was deleted in August 1994 because of the issuance of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (TS-123, dated April 1993), which superseded the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, issued in January 1976 (TS-23) and the Draft Grade Evaluation Guide for White Collar Supervisors, issued in 1991.**

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